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## **U**NION ORGANIZING

**by**

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## UNION ORGANIZING

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ORGANIZED LABOR has been hitting serious snags as it strives to extend union membership to as many as possible of the 50-odd million workers in the United States who remain outside its ranks. Unions have recruited scarcely more than 100,000 new members since last December, when the newly unified American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations pledged a "militant campaign" to double the 16 million workers in its affiliated unions.

The drive was "not going to be any milk-toast movement," President George Meany told the founding convention of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. at New York. "We are going to use every legal means . . . to organize the unorganized. No little men with loud voices in either political or industrial life are going to turn us aside." Walter P. Reuther, former president of the C.I.O. and now president of the Industrial Union Department of the united organization, said that labor unity provided "new dynamic forces out of which we can build a bigger, stronger labor movement." He called on affiliated unions to undertake "an organizational crusade such as this country has never seen."

Emphasis on organizing is due to labor's concern over a decline in the rate of union growth since World War II, in contrast with giant strides made in the preceding decade. The fact that three-fourths of the labor force is outside the trade union movement places serious limitations on organized labor's power both at the bargaining table and in the political sphere.

### ROLE OF THE A.F.L.-C.I.O. IN ORGANIZING CAMPAIGN

A chief reason for merging the two national labor federations was to create a stronger instrument for enlarging total union strength. Labor leaders agreed that trade unionism could gain greater influence only by broadening its membership to include at least a majority of the country's wage-

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earners. Separately the two federations showed little promise of attaining that objective; with organic unity, they could merge resources of talent and money and eliminate the waste of energy involved in "organizing the organized"—that is, raiding each other's membership.

The important role to be taken by the new national federation in organizing was spelled out in its constitution: "The Executive Council shall use every possible means to assist affiliated unions in the organization of the unorganized, and to organize new national and international unions, organizing committees,<sup>1</sup> and directly affiliated local unions." A resolution adopted at the December convention of the merging federations said:

The A.F.L.-C.I.O. and its affiliated unions hereby dedicate themselves and will provide their fullest and most vigorous support to an expanded organizing program equal to the task of overcoming the obstacles in the path of nation-wide organization. We shall do everything in our power to further such organization of the unorganized. . . . The trade union movement's objective in the years immediately ahead must be at least the doubling of union membership.

A special Department of Organization, set up to carry on the organizing campaign, is the most heavily financed of all A.F.L.-C.I.O. departments; its chief, John W. Livingston, is third ranking officer of the federation in terms of salary. Activities of the department are financed by appropriations from the federation treasury, by assessments on affiliates, and by voluntary donations. The convention authorized President Meany to appoint an organizing fund-raising committee, chosen from among top officers of affiliates, and urged all member unions to contribute.

An estimated \$7 million to \$8 million is believed to be available for the work of organization.<sup>2</sup> Reuther told the convention that C.I.O. unions had pledged \$4 million to the organizing campaign with more to come. Affiliated unions have since been assessed 15c for each member over a 15-month period—for a total of \$2 1/4 million—to help support organizing activities. The organizing department now has a staff of 300, including organizers assigned to assist the membership drives of affiliated unions.

<sup>1</sup> An organizing committee consists of a group of local unions which are directly affiliated with the national federation and under its control.

<sup>2</sup> Sidney Lens, "Will Merged Labor Set New Goals?" *Harvard Business Review*, March-April 1956, p. 61.

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#### **MAJOR TARGET: LARGEST TEXTILE MILLS IN SOUTH**

The first task of the new organizing department was to survey the country to obtain the data needed to conduct an effective union crusade. Information was gathered on union strength and potential growth in every state, industry, and field of employment. Field researchers reported on social and economic conditions in each area and on the state of employer-employee relations in each establishment of any size. On the basis of this information, the department drew up its major lines of attack.

The study was completed in time for presentation to the Executive Council last February in the form of a confidential document. It said the initial effort must be made in the South, because of the great industrial expansion and the relatively few unionized establishments in that region. The report singled out certain multiple-plant enterprises in textiles and chemicals as first targets—among them Burlington Industries, Inc., with approximately 90 plants, and DuPont, with 77 plants. If these giants could be unionized, it was believed that smaller firms in the South would soon fall into line.

Organizing headquarters recommended that major drives be launched as soon as possible in the oil and natural gas industry, wholesale and retail trades, service trades (hotels, restaurants, barber shops, etc.), financial establishments (banks, insurance, and real estate companies) and among employees of state and local governments.

Organizing Chief Livingston reported in August that the drive in the South was proceeding according to plan and that the groundwork had been laid for organizing oil, chemical, and furniture workers, and certain white-collar groups. Organizers were active in a number of southern textile mills and at factories of the Reynolds Tobacco Co. in Winston-Salem, N. C., last of the big non-union producers of cigarettes.<sup>3</sup>

Organizing activities of the central federation are supplementary to those carried on by affiliated unions. All unions consider organizing of primary importance at all times. "When any union stops organizing . . . that union will die

<sup>3</sup> Reynolds Tobacco Co. had previously been under contract with the Food and Tobacco Union, expelled from the C.I.O. in 1949 for Communist domination. The contract expired in 1950 and the company has not since engaged in collective bargaining.

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of dry rot. Organizing . . . is the very life blood of any union."<sup>4</sup> Unions differ, however, in the amount of zeal they put into organizing campaigns.

#### **ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES OF INDIVIDUAL LABOR UNIONS**

Several powerful unions are making aggressive drives for new members without seeking aid from the national federation. Some are near-saturation unions, so far as core membership is concerned, but are ambitious to bring new categories of employment into their fold. The United Automobile Workers and United Steelworkers are making strong bids for new members among clerical, technical, and professional employees of plants where they now have contracts covering production workers.<sup>5</sup> Only one-tenth of the white-collar workers in steel and aluminum plants now belong to the steel union; one-fifth of the 400,000 white-collar workers in the country's automobile plants are U.A.W. members.

Most dynamic of the unions going it alone is the Brotherhood of Teamsters, which places few restrictions on the scope of its organizing activities. Virtually any group of workers connected however remotely with goods transported by motor carrier is subject to organizing efforts of this union. The Teamsters spent \$1.3 million on organizing in 1955; the current organizing budget is even larger than that for last year.<sup>6</sup>

Unions receiving A.F.L.-C.I.O. support for organizing drives are mainly those which lack the financial resources to do an effective job alone or which are active in areas that coincide with key points in the federation's master plan. Several of the group are large unions which have suffered reverses in recent years; others are small unions pioneering in new fields.

The A.F.L.-C.I.O. has assigned 25 organizers to the Textile Workers Union (formerly C.I.O.) whose earlier organizing efforts in the South proved costly and had little success. Thanks to the central body, the American Federation of Teachers, with only 50,000 members among the

<sup>4</sup> John W. Livingston, A.F.L.-C.I.O. convention, New York, Dec. 6, 1955.

<sup>5</sup> Steelworkers President David J. MacDonald said on Sept. 16 that the union's three-year no-strike agreement, negotiated with the steel industry last summer, provided an opportunity to concentrate on organizing white-collar workers.

<sup>6</sup> The Teamsters' organizing campaign is, in part, a product of the union's drive for leadership in the whole labor movement; it is already well on its way to becoming the biggest union in the country.

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nation's one million school teachers, now has four full-time organizers who hope to add 200,000 names to the union roster in the next two years.

### SOFT AND TOUGH APPROACHES IN ORGANIZING WORK

Unlike the violent organizing wars of earlier years, the mid-century membership drive appears to be moving with caution, moderation, and great concern for public opinion. Organizing Chief Livingston warned the A.F.L.-C.I.O. convention last December that it would "take some time to put into effect our new organizational procedures." Later, he said that organizing would be conducted "without fanfare."

Union literature stresses that organizers are essentially "salesmen"; their job is not only to convince unorganized workers that they will benefit by joining unions, but at the same time to raise the prestige of unionism in the communities in which they work. Organizers going into a new, non-union area are given time to become widely acquainted; much of their preliminary work is done in friendly conversation "over a beer." In every case an effort is made to find organizers who are native to the region to be organized.

If one plant in the organizer's territory already has been unionized, he searches out a union member who has a relative or friend in the non-union plant. The first objective is to form a nucleus, however small, of workers receptive to the idea of union organization. Patience is of great importance; a petition to the National Labor Relations Board for a union-recognition election is withheld until the organizer is fairly sure of commanding a 51 per cent favorable vote among employees.

The impression that organizing activity is taking a more pacific turn is supported by the decision of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. Executive Council last August to launch an "educational campaign" in the South to change the region's "whole mental attitude" toward unionism. President Meany said a long-range outlook was essential to success of the organizing campaign; the object would be to convince businessmen as well as workers that "trade unions make sense."

Whether all affiliated unions will adopt the gentler methods of persuasion advocated by the high command

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remains to be seen. The Teamsters' union, for one, is noted for rough tactics. It has an uncommonly strong weapon in its control of truckers, whose refusal to carry or deliver goods for "unfair" firms can bring swift economic ruin to an employer. *Business Week* has commented that "While other unions try to sell union membership to workers through pamphlets, home visits and so on, the Teamsters go after the employers first." In the current drive on drug firms in the Philadelphia area, however, the union appears to have softened its usual tactics; one Teamster official said that this time the union was "organizing with our heads not our fists."<sup>7</sup>

The Teamsters are masters of what has been called the "strategic alliance," in which a strong union can help a weak union expand by virtue of the former's strategic position in the latter's industry.<sup>8</sup> The Teamsters have thus helped in organizing grocery clerks through the power of truck drivers to bring pressure on employing grocers for recognition of the clerk's union. The Teamsters are seeking similar alliances with longshoremen, particularly in southern port cities, in the hope that refusal by dock workers to handle non-union cargo will bring pressure for union recognition in many plants and shops remote from the seaboard.

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### **Advances and Retreats In Trade Unionism**

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THE CURRENT DRIVE for union expansion is being put under way at a time when organized labor, though at an historic peak of strength, has not been able to expand its numbers significantly. Over the past ten years the increase in union membership has barely kept pace with growth of the labor force. Since World War II, the ratio has remained at about one organized worker in every four, or one in every three non-farm, civilian workers. This suggests that "Trade unionism in the United States has reached, at least temporarily, a sort of plateau in terms of growth relative to

<sup>7</sup> "Teamsters' Drive Tests the Hard-Boiled Approach," *Business Week*, Sept. 8, 1956, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> Marten S. Estey, "The Strategic Alliance as a Factor in Union Growth," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, October 1955, p. 41.

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the industrial labor force and possibly of influence at the collective bargaining table.”<sup>9</sup>

Organized labor regards the leveling-off of union growth as a distinct threat of future decline. The organizing resolution adopted at the A.F.L.-C.I.O. convention last December noted that “Growth in total union membership [since 1950] has come primarily from economic expansion in establishments and industries already organized.” Unions “cannot afford to be satisfied with past gains,” because these “are always threatened as long as large pockets of unorganized workers remain.”

### EXTENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF UNION MEMBERSHIP

Membership in national and international labor unions with headquarters in the United States stood, at the latest count by the U.S. Labor Department in early 1955, at 18 million, including one million workers outside the United States (chiefly in Canada). Approximately 16.1 million workers are members of A.F.L.-C.I.O. affiliated unions (10.9 million in former A.F.L. and 5.2 million in former C.I.O. unions); the remainder belong to independent unions. The figure of 18 million represents an increase of at least one million over the last previous Labor Department count in 1953.

Individual unions range in membership from a few dozen persons to more than a million. Approximately 100 of them have fewer than 25,000 members apiece. Six have a combined total of six million, or one-third of all union members in the country. The largest unions are the Automobile Workers, Steelworkers, and Teamsters, each with around 1.2 million members; Carpenters and Machinists, with 800,000 to 900,000 each; and Electrical Workers, with 630,000 members.

Union membership is unevenly distributed geographically; more than half of it is in six states: California, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania. The most highly organized states, relative to total non-farm labor, are in the Far West and Middle West. More than one-half of all non-farm workers (53.5 per cent) are organized in the State of Washington; in five states—Indiana, Michigan, Montana, Oregon, West Virginia—between 40

<sup>9</sup> E. M. Douty, “Labor Status and Collective Bargaining,” *Monthly Labor Review*, June 1956, p. 647.

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and 50 per cent are unionized. In contrast, only one-third of New York's non-farm workers belong to unions.

Unions are weakest in the South. Alabama, the most highly organized southern state, has only one-fourth of its non-farm workers in unions. Labor makes its poorest showing in North and South Carolina, where only 8 to 9 per cent of the non-farm workers are organized.<sup>10</sup>

Membership is not the sole index of organized labor's strength. An important factor is the extent to which major segments of the economy are unionized. Production workers in key manufacturing industries—automobile, aircraft, coal, glass, rubber, steel—are largely organized. Many non-manufacturing industries are unionized almost to the saturation point: Communications, interstate transportation, building trades, and many leading crafts. Virtually all railroad workers, four-fifths of the miners, and nearly three-fourths of the manufacturing production workers are union members.

HISTORIC FACTORS IN UNION GROWTH, 1900-1956

Growth in the size and power of labor unions in the United States is a major phenomenon of the 20th century; only within the past two decades, however, has union strength become relatively secure. Union membership was held at the turn of the century by only 865,000 workers in a civilian labor force of 29 million persons. By 1920, union rolls had risen by more than 500 per cent to a total of 4.7 million, while the labor force had grown by only 40 per cent to 41 million.<sup>11</sup>

A large part of the growth was due to high employment levels and to government policy during World War I. In return for a no-strike promise, the wartime administration at Washington gave strong support to union demands. Labor was represented on the National War Labor Board, which decided labor disputes; the board recognized the right of workers to organize, ruled against employer interference with that right, and favored an eight-hour day wherever possible. Unions gained more than one million members.

<sup>10</sup> National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc., *Basic Research and Analysis of Current Business Conditions*, May 1956, pp. 45-46. The Bureau's estimates of union membership by states are for 1953, but confidential results of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. survey made early this year have been reported to conform closely to the Bureau's estimates.

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Solomon, "Dimensions of Union Growth, 1900-1950," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, July 1956, p. 546.

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With the loss of government support when the war ended, the earlier struggle for union recognition had to be renewed. Unemployment during the 1921-22 depression also detracted from labor's power to fight in a contest in which management held most of the legal trump cards. Union membership fell between 1920 and 1923 from a peak of 5 million down to 3.5 million workers.

Paradoxically, the return of prosperity brought further union decline. Wage advances, the freedom of employers to fire workers who joined unions, and growth of paternalistic company unions reduced the attractiveness of membership in bona fide labor organizations. Frequent use of court injunctions by employers to combat union organizing activities weakened the effect of membership campaigns.

The economic collapse of 1929 put another dent in union ranks. When President Roosevelt took office in 1933, there were fewer than three million union members, the approximate total at the time the United States entered World War I. The pro-labor legislation of the New Deal then gave unionism its biggest boost in history.<sup>12</sup> Statutory recognition of the right of employees "to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing," granted and safeguarded by Section 7(a) of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, helped to put another million workers on union lists before the act was invalidated by the Supreme Court in 1935.

The National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act of 1935 renewed and expanded the earlier labor guarantees and strengthened governmental machinery for enforcing them. The act's provisions were frankly designed to compensate for labor's relative weakness under modern industrial conditions and bring about an approximate equality of bargaining power between employers and employees.

The Wagner Act supplied a tremendous stimulus to union organizing activity. It was particularly helpful in forwarding the dynamic program of the newly emerged C.I.O., which was organizing industry-wide unions embracing many categories of workers excluded from the A.F.L.

<sup>12</sup> The Norris-LaGuardia Anti-Injunction Act of 1932, a pre-New Deal landmark in labor history, had had little practical effect on union growth, chiefly because of the scarcity of jobs when and after it was enacted. The law limited employer use of court injunctions to restrict union activities and outlawed "yellow dog" contracts by which employers forced job applicants to promise not to join a union.

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craft unions.<sup>13</sup> By 1940 the number of organized workers had risen to 7.9 million in a total civilian labor force of 51.7 million; in less than a decade the proportion of workers belonging to unions had jumped from 7 to 15 per cent of the total. Equally important, the base for future union growth had been substantially widened.

World War II brought another big spurt. Expansion of employment in unionized industries, plus War Labor Board support of union membership, contributed to a 50 per cent growth in the ranks of organized labor. By 1945, 14.5 million, or one-fourth of the nation's wage-earners, were union members.

The epidemic of strikes that accompanied removal of wage controls and resumption of normal collective bargaining after the war<sup>14</sup> led to a change of direction in government labor policy. Congress felt that unions no longer needed special government help to be put on an equal footing with management; rather, unions able to impede industry's reconversion to civilian production should be curbed by stricter public regulation. Passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, along with numerous state laws, curbed union organizing activities and gave employers more leeway to combat growth of unionism.

Union advances were sustained, however, by strong employment conditions and widespread acceptance of collective bargaining procedures. Union membership declined slightly during the 1949 recession but picked up again in 1950, when it began a moderate climb at a rate slightly in excess of the growth of the labor force. The current rate of expansion is indicated by reports of the National Labor Relations Board on union recognition elections; in the first six months of 1956, approximately 130,000 employees voted for representation by a union; most of the workers were members of new union locals.

#### **FLUCTUATIONS AND GAPS IN LABOR UNION COVERAGE**

A striking aspect of union growth in the past ten years is that it has made no significant invasion of new areas of employment. The great bastions of union strength in the

<sup>13</sup> The C.I.O., originally a dissident group within the A.F.L. led by John L. Lewis, was formally established as a separate federation in 1938.

<sup>14</sup> In the 12 months following V-J Day, some 4,630 work stoppages occurred; they involved five million workers and accounted for 120 million man-days of idleness.

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crafts and mass production industries were established in earlier decades; recent growth has come largely from increases in the number of jobs in those areas.

Even among well-established unions, however, membership may fluctuate or exhibit a downward trend.<sup>15</sup> Combined membership in the two textile unions, for example, dropped from 490,000 to 382,000 between 1953 and 1955. The Textile Workers Union (formerly C.I.O.) reported to its convention last spring that, despite success in negotiating first-time contracts or winning recognition elections in 190 plants, its membership had continued to reflect the steady decline in textile employment which began in 1947.<sup>16</sup> Transfer of mills from highly unionized centers in the North to rural locations in the South further reduced union rolls. Today only one-fourth of all textile production workers are organized, compared with three-fourths of the workers in other manufacturing industries. An estimated 700,000 textile workers, chiefly in the South, are not union members.

Unions in shops characterized by seasonal employment, or which customarily hire large numbers of women, are most affected by "come and go" in membership. Officers of the Ladies' International Garment Workers, four-fifths of whose members are women, reported to the union's convention last May that recruitment of 200,000 new or reinstated members since 1954 "only barely covers exits from membership," and that it required "the most persistent efforts in organizing to maintain our membership at an even level."

The major gaps in labor organization are found in fields of employment which have never had a strong sense of identification with the trade union movement. An estimated 2½ million-3 million unionized white-collar workers constitute less than one-fifth of the total number employed in that group. In a total of seven million clerical employees, only 12 per cent are union members; most of them are employed by railroads, post offices, or manufacturing firms where production workers have strong unions. Union

<sup>15</sup> The U.S. Labor Department's *Directory of National and International Labor Unions in the United States, 1955* reported that the membership of one-third of 167 unions surveyed remained relatively stationary between 1953 and 1954; one-fifth reported gains of at least one per cent; the remainder suffered losses.

<sup>16</sup> Jobs of production workers in U.S. textile mills decreased by 287,600 between December 1947 and December 1955.

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membership is negligible among the 800,000 clerical employees of banks, insurance, and real estate firms.

Among the country's 7.8 million retail workers, only half a million are organized and their affiliations are spread over six different unions. Most of the unionized group work in food retailing; only one-tenth of the nation's department store employees are organized, as against 30 per cent of the grocery force. Retail unionization is almost entirely a big-city phenomenon.

Musicians, actors, and entertainers are almost 100 per cent organized, but only 12 per cent of the country's social workers and a bare 5 per cent of its teachers are union members. Out of 850,000 salaried technical employees—engineers, draftsmen, chemists, and so on—only 50,000 belong to unions.<sup>17</sup> Obviously, a significant advance in the numerical strength of labor unions can be achieved only when a major penetration of the aforementioned fields is effected.

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### **Hindrances To Future Union Growth**

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THE FACTOR most conducive to future vigorous growth of trade unionism in the United States is the prestige which the labor movement has gained, owing in part to the rise in economic and social status of the wage-earner. No longer spokesmen for the underpaid or the overworked, labor unions today represent an economically favored group in the national labor force; union membership is drawn largely from the great middle class, major consumers of industry's goods.

In working for further advances, unionism thus operates from strength rather than weakness. No group of significant influence in the nation opposes collective bargaining in principle. Labor leaders join business leaders in helping to shape public policy on many questions. Labor now seldom has to fight for a living wage or to correct oppressive working conditions; such basic labor protections

<sup>17</sup> Benjamin Solomon, "Dimensions of Union Growth, 1900-1950," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, July 1956, pp. 549-561; Marten S. Estey, "Patterns of Union Membership in the Retail Trades," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, July 1955, pp. 557-564.

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are covered by law. Union demands today are founded on the broader theory of advancing the national welfare by raising the level of consumer purchasing power. While elevation of labor's status may have been at the cost of some of its earlier reformist zeal, it has brought unionism closer to the mainstream of American life.<sup>18</sup> However, obstacles to union expansion were raised after World War II, when the pendulum took a long swing away from the favored position labor had enjoyed during the New Deal.

#### EFFECT OF TAFT-HARTLEY AND RIGHT-TO-WORK LAWS

Some of labor's chief organizing weapons have been blunted in recent years by the Taft-Hartley Act and by a host of union-regulating laws in the states. These measures are all based on the contention that a worker's right not to join a union ought to be as fully protected by law as his right to join one. Use of the strike, the picket line, and the boycott—traditional devices by which unions have sought to strengthen their powers of persuasion over indifferent workers and hostile employers—is now widely restricted.

By forbidding unions, as well as employers, to coerce workers, the Taft-Hartley Act supplied new grounds for legal action against use of those tactics for organizing purposes. By expressly granting employers "freedom of speech" on union matters and absolving them of responsibility for anti-union activity by "unauthorized agents," the federal law greatly widened the possible scope of such activities. By establishing an election process for decertifying an existing union as bargaining agent, it gave governmental support to a means of sapping union strength.

Taft-Hartley also partially eliminated a favorite union device for safeguarding and extending the membership gains of an established union—namely, the "union security" clause of a collective bargaining contract. The law prohibited the closed shop, in which only union members may be hired. Although it authorized the union shop, in which new employees must join the union within a specified period, it required approval by a majority of the employees in a special election. If a union denies membership to a worker

<sup>18</sup> Despite early Socialist coloration of some workers' organizations and recent Communist infiltration of certain unions, radicalism never has taken firm hold of the American trade union movement. Labor unions in general have had a middle-class orientation and have sought their goals within the framework of capitalist democracy.

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or expels a member for any reason other than non-payment of dues, the employer is not obligated to dismiss that worker.

By granting precedence to state laws on union security, the Taft-Hartley Act expressly sanctioned enforcement of labor regulations considerably stricter than those imposed by the central government. Seventeen states, including nearly all southern states, have right-to-work laws which ban the closed shop and/or the union shop.<sup>19</sup> Almost every state has some legislation regulating union activity; more than half of the states have laws pertaining specifically to picketing, boycotting, or striking.<sup>20</sup> Courts and various labor-regulating bodies recently have been applying legal restraints to unions, particularly in communities where unionism is new, more stringently. The National Labor Relations Board, moreover, has tended to leave an increasing number of labor cases to the jurisdiction of state authorities, who usually are less liberal toward unions.

Opinion varies as to the effect of recent labor legislation on union growth. Unions have gained numerical strength, but it is impossible to state whether the growth would have been more rapid in the absence of statutory restrictions. The decertification process has been used with relative infrequency; only 48 such elections, compared to around 2,700 certification elections, were held in the first half of 1956.<sup>21</sup> Labor fears, however, that decertification, as well as "freedom of speech" for employers, might become a serious threat in the event of an economic setback; some workers then might be inclined to give up union membership in order to safeguard their jobs.

A recent study of the Texas right-to-work law found that the effect of such laws on union organizing varied. In industries where it had been customary for unions to "organize the employer," the right-to-work law had been damaging. This was apparent in the relatively low level of unionization in the construction industry in Texas, in intrastate trucking, and in the printing trades. More damaging than the right-to-work law, the author found, was a

<sup>19</sup> Louisiana repealed its right-to-work law in July 1956; a Kansas right-to-work bill was vetoed by the governor last year.

<sup>20</sup> See "State Powers in Labor Relations," *E.R.R.*, Vol. I 1954, p. 323.

<sup>21</sup> Between 1948 and 1956 a total of 660 N.L.R.B. elections, involving 37,000 employee votes, resulted in decertification of unions. The number of decertification elections has been increasing in the past three years.—Joseph Krislov, "Union Decertification," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, July 1956, p. 589.

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statutory ban on secondary boycotts. Trucking unions, for instance, had been restrained from using such effective organizing devices as refusal to handle goods produced by non-union workers and assignment of roving pickets to follow trucks bearing such goods.<sup>22</sup>

#### DIFFICULTIES IN SOUTHERN STATES; RACE QUESTION

The most serious obstacles to union expansion are found in the South. The basic problem in many parts of that region is lack of a trade union tradition. Establishment of industrial plants in the rural areas confronts organizers with the problem of overcoming parochial hostility to the concept of collective bargaining.

Southern antipathy to unionism has been heightened by the bi-racial policy of most labor unions. Hundreds of protests from southern union members were addressed to the A.F.L.-C.I.O. after its Civil Rights Committee had attacked the white citizens' councils last February. Many southern trade union officials, who represent the indigenous labor leadership necessary to union expansion in the South, are active in the anti-integration councils. Several new labor organizations—the Southern Federation of Labor, Southern States Conference of Union People, and the Southern Aircraft Workers Association among them—have been formed as rivals of existing labor organizations.

A recent report on southern unionism noted that the greatest damage suffered so far was not loss of membership but "sterilization of many areas as fields for new organization."<sup>23</sup> Hostility to the racial policies of unions is blamed for failure of labor organizers to carry several recent certification elections in southern mills. Many newly recruited members tore up their membership cards, on the eve of the N.L.R.B. elections, in protest against the union refusal to bar Negro applicants.

Labor organizers accuse hostile employers of making deliberate use of the race issue to discredit unions. Advertisements in southern newspapers state that joining a union

<sup>22</sup> Frederic Meyers, "Effects of 'Right-to-Work' Laws: A Study of the Texas Act," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, October 1955, p. 77. Ralph J. Cordiner, president of the General Electric Co., recently praised Virginia for assuring its citizens the right to work without joining a union. He said at Richmond on Oct. 11: "We believe that we [General Electric] should go to states that have right-to-work laws. That's where we feel we should invest our shareholders' money."

<sup>23</sup> Henry L. Trewhitt, "Southern Unions and the Integration Issue," *The Reporter*, Oct. 4, 1956, p. 27.

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will aid desegregation forces. The organizers try to counter that argument by asserting that unions seek only to better conditions for all workers and that segregation or integration of workers in a place of employment is up to the employer, not the union.

The race problem adds one more to the many obstacles which have long blocked the path of union organizers in the South. The Textile Workers Union recently said that a "three-ply iron curtain" had been lowered against formation of unions in this region: Employer resistance, local vigilantes, and anti-labor legislation. "The barrier erected by the boss is formidable enough . . . to hamper organization seriously. It runs the gamut of intimidation, spying, and brainwashing of employees."<sup>24</sup>

Much of the textile union's bill of complaints reads like a page out of the labor wars of a generation or two ago. According to the union, organizers are beaten up or run out of town; workers are fired or "grilled" for suspicion of union sympathy; company "stooges" call fake union meetings to identify pro-union employees; employers organize citizens' committees "to mobilize the town against the union." Textile Workers President William Pollock asserted in the *New York Times*, Oct. 27, that Taft-Hartley had enabled employers to fire workers for union activity with impunity and had brought new organizing "to a dead halt."

A different view of the factors obstructing union progress in the South was presented by the *New York Journal of Commerce* on Nov. 21, 1955. It contended that union growth there had been slowed by "fast-improving conditions in [the] southern mills" and by narrowing of wage differentials between northern and southern mill workers, due in part to the hike in the statutory minimum wage. Three reasons why "southern labor continues to turn its back on blandishments" of union organizers were cited: Mill workers' economic gains, won without benefit of unions; a regional tendency to regard unionism as an "alien ideal"; and the fact that many organizers in the past were northerners, who were resented as intruders.

RIVALRY OF UNIONS AND JURISDICTIONAL CONFLICTS

Some of the problems encountered by labor in pressing for new members are internal. Long-standing rivalry be-

<sup>24</sup> "Crisis for America," *Textile Labor*, September 1956, p. 9.

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tween A.F.L. and C.I.O. unions in the same fields was not abolished by welding the two parent federations. Chief Organizer Livingston, shortly after taking office, termed jurisdictional conflicts of rival unions the most serious obstacle standing in the way of his organizing plans.

An effort to eliminate duplication in organizing work preceded merger of the federations by two years. A no-raiding agreement concluded in December 1953 was followed by numerous similar pacts between affiliated unions and by a few actual union mergers.

Since the A.F.L. and C.I.O. united, there have been only two consolidations of rival unions: American Federation of City Employees with Government and Civic Workers Committee; Barbers and Beauty Culturists with Journey-men Barbers and Hairdressers. Plans to merge two larger unions—the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen with the United Packinghouse Workers—recently fell through at the last moment. Other mergers are in the discussion stage. A number of rival unions have called a truce for the purpose of conducting joint organizing activities. The Upholsterers International Union and the United Furniture Workers agreed in October to joint operations in many fields, including a drive to organize southern furniture workers.

The A.F.L.-C.I.O. made a special effort to bring the two textile unions together before putting its own strength into the southern organizing campaign, but the unions failed to iron out their differences. Finally, the A.F.L.-C.I.O. Executive Council in June instructed its organizing department to go ahead with its plans in conjunction with the larger of the two textile unions, which was formerly affiliated with the C.I.O.

#### **PROSPECTS FOR ORGANIZING WHITE-COLLAR WORKERS**

Expansion of union membership is limited at all times by the size of that part of the labor force for which unionization is feasible. Changes in composition of the labor force over the years tend to expand certain areas of potential unionization and to contract others. A recent study pointed out that between 1900 and 1950 the "union potential" grew from 49 per cent to 72.5 per cent of the total labor force. Omitted as union prospects were certain groups in the professions (doctors and lawyers, but not teachers

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and nurses); domestic, farm, and self-employed workers; and numerous small groups such as real estate agents, local police and firemen, peddlers, and so on.

Of particular importance is the fact that the white-collar component of the labor force has grown substantially. If the "union potential" were 100 per cent organized, white-collar workers would comprise more than one-third of all union members.

The major obstacle to organizing most white-collar workers is the same as that encountered in certain industrial areas of the South—unionism simply has not sold itself as a means of betterment. Many white-collar workers, especially members of professional and sub-professional groups, look on union membership as something for manual workers; they would feel a loss of status if they joined a union. Teachers and nurses in particular feel that union allegiance would conflict with professional responsibilities, and that feeling is reinforced by prevailing attitudes among school and hospital boards.

Union organizing in the retail trades and among office employees is hampered by the essentially local nature of much of that type of employment, which makes it difficult to win support for concerted action with union members in other communities. "The attempt to unionize is . . . confused by the fact that [many white-collar jobs] . . . are cross-industry occupations. As a result, the union attack is weakened, since either principle of organization—by industry or by occupation—has serious disadvantages."<sup>25</sup> The large proportion of women in retailing and office work is another deterrent to organization. Because women tend to move in and out of the labor force, unionism holds relatively little appeal for them; only three million of 21 million employed women are members of unions. Many white-collar workers, moreover, are employed by small establishments which unions find it difficult to penetrate. Joining a union is more apt to seem an act of disloyalty in a small firm, where workers are closely associated with the employer and often do the same grade of work, than in a big industrial establishment.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin Solomon, "Dimensions of Union Growth, 1900-1950," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, July 1956, p. 566.